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RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 3150
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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0738
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RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 0158

RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 4292
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RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 8601
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RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 003500

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XOXO
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Leading media (banner in The Jerusalem Post) quoted PA officials as saying that Israel's incursion into Gaza is another attempt to sabotage the peace process. So far, at least six Palestinians have

been killed in the operation. Ha'aretz reported that cabinet plans to discuss today increase the action to a large-scale operation. Maariv noted that over 270 Palestinian terrorists and 20 civilians have been killed in the Strip since May. Maariv cited the IDF's belief that over 300 Palestinians will have been killed by the end of the year. Israel Radio reported that this morning 17 rockets were fired at the western Negev. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for 12 of them. The Jerusalem Post reported that on Tuesday the state claimed that the High Court of Justice must not intervene in its Sderot security policy. Speaking on Israel Radio this afternoon, Sderot Mayor Eli Moyal announced his resignation.

Yediot reported that the first Israeli-Palestinian meeting on the permanent status, which will be held today, will be devoted to working arrangements and the establishment of negotiating teams. Yediot reported that the Palestinians are expected to demand the creation of teams on each of the core issues. The newspaper reported that U.S. security monitor Gen. James Jones will arrive in Israel next week. He will hold preliminary meetings with the heads of Israel's security establishment. The newspaper also reported that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is expected to come to Israel a week later to prepare President Bush's visit, which Yediot said will take place on January 9. Israel Radio quoted Palestinian sources assaying that the Secretary of State will not come to the region, but that she will meet with Palestinian representatives in Paris.

Maariv reported that following the Israeli response to the abduction of two IDF soldiers from Lebanon in July 2006, Iran withdrew Hizballah Secretary-General Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah's military authority. Maariv quoted Western intelligence sources as saying that Hizballah now needs authorization from the Iranian Revolutionary Guards to carry out significant operations against Israel. Meanwhile, Yediot reported that Hizballah has recently bolstered its activity, tightening its relations with Palestinian terrorist organizations. The newspaper reported that Hizballah has entrusted its senior operative Kais Obeid, who played a key role in the abduction of the Israeli Elchanan Tenenbaum to Lebanon six years ago, with responsibility for the Gaza Strip.

The Jerusalem Post, Maariv and Ha'aretz reported that on Tuesday for the first time the UN passed a non-political Israeli resolution (on agriculture). Maariv reported that Iran and Syria did not vote against the Israeli proposal.

Ha'aretz reported that the Interior Ministry will close down its operation in Ethiopia in another two weeks, after signing the last immigration permit for Falash Mura who are eligible to immigrate to Israel. The Falash Mura are Ethiopian Jews whose ancestors converted to Christianity.

Ha'aretz reported that on Tuesday the Civil Administration in the territories told the interministerial committee on unauthorized outposts that hundreds, even thousands, of planned housing units in the West Bank have building permits and do not need any further government approval before construction can begin. The Jerusalem Post reported that FM Tzipi Livni and Strategic Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman sparred over unauthorized outposts at the committee meeting.

Ha'aretz quoted PM Ehud Olmert as saying on Tuesday in a speech to the Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University that Iran remains dangerous. He was referring to the recent National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) report. The Jerusalem Post quoted Olmert as saying that the debate over the NIE report has triggered an "exaggerated debate" inside Israel. Former Mossad Director Ephraim Halevy was quoted as saying on Tuesday in an interview with The Jerusalem Post that Israel must ensure that it is a direct participant in U.S. talks with Iran, which appear to be shaping up. Otherwise, Halevy warned, the future of the region will be determined in a forum from which Israel is excluded.

Maariv reported that the defense establishment was "surprised" to find that Israel Aerospace Industries is developing a missile defense system. The Defense Ministry and the IDF are developing two interception systems -- one of which is being built by the Rafael company.

Israel Radio reported that the soldiers of a paratrooper unit are being investigated for humiliating Palestinians and taking bribes from them.

The Jerusalem Post and Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that on Tuesday President Bush hosted the family of Daniel Pearl, the American journalist who was kidnapped and murdered in Karachi in 2002.

The Jerusalem Post printed a Jewish Telegraphic Agency report on Jewish soldiers in the U.S. Army lighting Chanukah candles in Camp Taji in Iraq

Yediot reported that on Tuesday in Paris Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi told the President of the French National Assembly that his preferred solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was one state for two peoples.

Yediot cited the GOI's Central Bureau of Statistics as saying that in 2006 Israeli Arabs consolidated their majority (53.1%) in the Galilee. Jews comprise 46.9% of the population in the region.

All media reported that on Tuesday the negotiations between the state and the secondary teachers' union ended abruptly and that the National Labor Court ordered the teachers to return to work. The return to work order will take effect on Thursday.

Mideast:

Summary:

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "[Secretary] Rice also expressed fear that the construction in Har Homa would disrupt the Annapolis process.... Israel has no good answer to the American objections.... At this rate, and with this sagacity, the Annapolis conference will prove no more than a barren footnote."

Columnist Michael Freund, who was an assistant to former prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "What [is particularly] troubling about her statement on Har Homa is that it lends credence to the discriminatory notion that certain places should be off-limits to Jews simply because they are Jews."

Conservative columnist Yosef Harif wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "The Labor Party, which has for years shaped Israeli policy, is starting to lose its specificity and looks like a second Kadima."

Columnist Gilad Katz wrote on page one of the nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe: "It is becoming obvious that the Olmert-Livni-Barak government has no 'holy cows' and that the last line of defense was ruptured without any special Palestinian endeavor."

Block Quotes:

II. "From Annapolis to Har Homa"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (12/12): "[U.S.] administration spokespeople normally oppose any moves liable to damage Israeli-Palestinian final-status negotiations -- namely, the settlements. But this time, [Secretary] Rice also expressed fear that the construction in Har Homa would disrupt the Annapolis process.... Israel has no good answer to the American objections.... No one in the world recognizes Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem.... Nor can Israel rely on Bush's April 2004 letter to former prime minister Ariel Sharon in which the President of the U.S. said the reality created by settlements in the territories must be taken into account. Bush's declaration was not a commitment to

refrain from evacuating settlements, does not bind his successors and has even been demonstratively omitted from other diplomatic documents.... [Israel's old tricks] merely provide the Palestinians with ammunition for their propaganda, help Hamas to claim that Olmert is humiliating Abbas, and push Bush and Rice into taking a stand against Israel. The Annapolis festivities have ended, and the test will be in the dull implementation. Thus far, not a single outpost has been evacuated, not the slightest diplomatic progress has been made, and Israel is retreating into the worst of all possible worlds -- subject to terror attacks that the Palestinians are still not really trying to restrain, yet putting itself, with its own hands, on the diplomatic defensive. At this rate, and with this sagacity, the Annapolis conference will prove no more than a barren footnote."

II. "Condi Hangs a 'No Jews Allowed' Sign"

Columnist Michael Freund, who was an assistant to former prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (12/12): "Condoleezza Rice has got some nerve. First, the U.S. Secretary of State had the chutzpa to compare Israel's treatment of Palestinians to that meted out to U.S. blacks during the bad old days of the segregationist South.... Needless to say, the fact that American blacks were victims of violence and hate, while Palestinians are its proficient practitioners, seems to have escaped the Secretary of State's attention. Moreover, Rice's comparison between Israeli security measures and America's Jim Crow laws is both intellectually dishonest and morally obscene. There is no similarity whatsoever between Israel establishing a checkpoint aimed at catching Palestinian suicide bombers and the state of Georgia's 1960s era prohibition against serving blacks and whites in the same restaurant... When Israel decides to build some new apartments in an already-existing section of Jerusalem, Rice suddenly finds her voice? Who does she think she is kidding? But what was still more troubling about her statement on Har Homa is that it lends credence to the discriminatory notion that certain places should be off-limits to Jews simply because they are Jews.... Now, following in our ancestors' footsteps, we have returned to reclaim what is rightfully ours. So step aside, Ms. Rice, and please do not try to interfere. Like it or not, nothing can stop this historical process from unfolding."

III. "Kadima II"

Conservative columnist Yosef Harif wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (12/12): "In his speech at Annapolis, [Ehud] Barak said: 'I ... fully support this process and I will do my utmost to make it succeed.' Thus Barak has now turned into the full partner in the diplomatic activity of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister. This development effectively blurs the differences in diplomatic outlook between the two large parties. The Labor Party, which has for years shaped Israeli policy, is starting to lose its specificity and looks like a second Kadima."

IV. "Total Diplomatic Dismantling"

Columnist Gilad Katz wrote on page one of the nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe (12/12): "It is becoming obvious that the Olmert-Livni-Barak government has no 'holy cows' and that the last line of defense was ruptured without any special Palestinian endeavor. Starting today, everything will be placed on the negotiating table: refugees, borders, and Jerusalem -- all at a discounted price.... The total diplomatic dismantling by [Olmert] and the Foreign Minister is not obvious to the general [Israeli] public. Their manipulative claim that Israel is not conceding anything as long as the Palestinians do not respect their commitments, is void of contents."

JONES